



Maricopa County

News Release

Environmental Services Department

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Be Safe this Memorial Day Weekend

Swimming, Grilling, Hiking, oh my! Mosquitoes will be out there too!

Memorial Day weekend marks the unofficial start of summer, bringing warm weather, barbecue, swimming, camping, visiting lost loved ones, attending events in the park, etc. With all the excitement going on, we may lose sight of our safety.

Outdoor Safety and WNV Protection

If you attend an outdoor event, visit the cemetery, go hiking, etc, make sure you protect yourselves from mosquito bites. Inform your family and be prepared before engaging in any activity outdoors. Utilize the following tips to maximize your protection from West Nile Virus (WNV).

- Limit outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- If you are outside, cover up by wearing long-sleeved shirts, pants, shoes and socks, if possible.
- Use mosquito repellent on exposed skin according to label instructions. CDC recommends using repellent containing DEET.
- Eliminate standing water on your property which can become possible mosquito breeding sites. These include but are not limited to standing waters in tires, plastic containers, or any water holding container. If you leave flowers in the cemetery on Memorial Day make sure to follow-up with removing the vase's water a couple days later to prevent mosquito breeding.

Maricopa County Environmental Services department director John Power reminds us to not let safety lapse. "With other serious health concerns going on right now, it's easy to let these simple safety tips lapse. But remember, following safety tips will prevent mosquito breeding and help us alleviate these concerns."

Remember, West Nile virus is spread when a mosquito feeds on an infected bird. The mosquito then bites an animal or a person who may develop a fever, muscle aches, headache, or other symptoms relating to WNV. These symptoms may take anywhere from three to fourteen days to appear and only last for a few days. Vector Control work diligently to ensure samples are taken and tested often in areas throughout the county.

"Unfortunately, mosquitoes thrive in the Arizona heat. So with the unseasonably warm temperatures we have already experienced this season, it has created the perfect environment for mosquito breeding," said Dr. Bob England, director of Maricopa Department of Public Health. "When you are outside this summer season, slap on that repellent and stay hydrated while you are at it."

“Residents have to remember that WNV is serious and we can’t do it all. They must take proper precautions,” urges John Townsend, division manager of the Environmental Services department Vector Control Division. He also wants to remind residents that draining pools won’t solve your problem. “Mosquitoes can breed in small amounts of water. Also, draining may counteract the treatment by the inspectors. Remember that we (Vector Control) have mosquito eating fish available for residents.”

Many people who are infected with WNV will never experience any symptoms. Among those most at risk for developing serious illness include people over fifty, those with immune deficiencies, and those who spend a lot of time outdoors.

For more information on West Nile virus, public health assistance, as well as for WNV dead bird drop-off locations, to report green pools or file any mosquito related complaint, and for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, call (602) 506-0700 or visit www.maricopa.gov/wnv.

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